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Meeting Family Needs:

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New Directions in Service Delivery for Alberta Families

THE PREMIER'S COUNCIL IN SUPPORT OF
ALBERTA FAMILIES

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Meeting Family Needs:

New Directions in Service Delivery for Alberta Families

October, 1994

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Cataloguing in Publication Data

Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families
Meeting Family Needs: New Directions in Service Delivery for Alberta Families

ISBN 7732-1522-0

1. Child welfare - Alberta 2. Family policy - Alberta 3. Family services - Alberta I. Title

HQ 700 A42 P43 1994

Additional copies are available from:

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A Family in Need

John and Paula Anderson are both in their mid-thirties and live in a small town outside of Edmonton. They have one child: a fourteen year old son Kevin who has a learning disability. John worked in his own one-man construction business after he left high school, while Paula worked in a local grocery store part-time. To help Kevin keep up at school, Paula spent many evenings reviewing his school work with him. This was suggested by the school principal who was afraid that if Kevin didn't get help he would likely fall behind the other students and run the risk of not graduating from high school.

Just over 18 months ago, John hurt his back in a bad fall at work. Despite extensive physiotherapy and rest he was told by his local doctor that he would have to leave construction and find a less physically demanding job. Because John was self-employed, he was not eligible for Worker's Compensation or Unemployment Insurance benefits.

John, who left high school without completing his diploma, was shocked by the news. He immediately tried to enroll at the local community college for high school upgrading and possibly business courses. Unfortunately, all the places were filled and so he was advised to reapply next year.

With mortgage payments, car payments and the day-to-day costs of raising a family, John was forced to look for "fill-in" jobs to pay the bills. He had little success in finding anything. To help out, Paula worked longer hours at the grocery store, but this unfortunately meant she could no longer help Kevin with his school studies, and was often out in the evenings.

Tensions in the home increased. John was frustrated and angry at his inability to find work, Paula worried and tired, while Kevin felt deserted. In the fall of 1992, the family's world literally blew apart when Kevin ran away from home. He was gone for three days - three days which were the longest John and Paula had ever known.

At this stage, the Andersons knew they needed help. They did not know who to turn to, however, or even where to ask for assistance. They felt lost and alone.

I. Introduction

Families are the foundation of Alberta

Families are the foundation of our province. In their many and varied forms, they are an important influence shaping who we are, how we feel about ourselves and how we approach the challenges of life.

Like the Andersons, almost all families, at one time or another, require some assistance from the many different services and community agencies available to help them. School systems, the local health unit, day care or a parent support group are all examples of the many different types of services families use. Indeed, families rely on these services not only to support them in their everyday lives, but also often turn to them in times of need.

The use individual families make of these many different services varies. Some require help or support for a short period, while others for a much longer one; some use a number of different services at the same time while others use only one; some families need support in making major improvements in their quality of life while others require assistance in introducing small but significant changes that help them continue to function. Whatever the particular needs of families, it is essential that quality services are available both to meet these needs and to contribute to improved outcomes for family well-being. Such services are an important support for all families, and contribute significantly to their health and vitality.

Families find the service system difficult to use and often unresponsive to their real needs

Recently, however, both the effectiveness of the current service delivery system and the impact of services on family well-being have been challenged as part of a general push for more accountability and value in the way services are planned and delivered. Despite the allocation of massive resources, as well as the rapid growth in service agencies and programs, many Alberta families continue to find it difficult to use the current service system, while the actual services they receive go only a small way to meeting their real needs. This inability of the current service system to meet family needs is a matter of concern for all Albertans. The solutions required demand government, community and family attention, and the time to act is now.

The work of the Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families builds on the premise that families are the principle vehicle through which Alberta's culture, values and knowledge are maintained and enriched.

As part of its mandate to ensure that government programs, policies and legislation are family-friendly, the Council has developed the Family Policy Grid against which all programs are evaluated to ensure that they are fair, supportive and encouraging to Alberta families[1]. The review of programs to date, however, as well as the collection of Albertans' concerns through community forums, individual written submissions and discussion groups, have both questioned the effectiveness of services and programs in meeting family needs[2].

The Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families has, with the help of several government departments, examined the challenges families face in using services

In response, the Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families, in conjunction with several departments of government, conducted a review of the challenges that families face in accessing and using services. The main objective of the review was to develop some solutions to these challenges and in so doing to provide a framework for new models of service delivery.

This report is the outcome of the review. It draws on the ideas and experiences of senior government staff as well as some of the recent findings from the growing literature on services and service delivery. The report is not a final word on services and service delivery for families. Rather, it is intended to stimulate further thought, discussion, research and changes in the delivery of services to better meet the needs of families. Since this review was undertaken, a Commissioner of Services for Children was appointed with the mandate to redesign services for children and families. The process of redesign will involve the public and various stakeholders. The intent of this paper is to provide background information and a potential framework on which to build a better service system for children and families in Alberta.

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[1] Family Policy Grid - The Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families, 1992.

[2] Albertans Speak out About Families. The Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families, 1992.

II. Pressures for Change in the way Services are Delivered

Families, the government and service agencies recognize the need for change in service delivery

There has been much recent discussion within Alberta on the way in which services are planned and delivered. Although Alberta families value the many support programs and services available to them, they have begun, along with the government and service agencies, to question whether these services are delivered in the most effective manner and to ask if it is possible to do things differently.

From the government perspective, there is the increasing need to balance budgets while also maintaining services and not raising taxes. Service agencies meanwhile face the twin challenges of providing more and more services with fewer resources, while also planning and coordinating these services with those of other agencies.

In short, families, the government and service providers all recognize the need for changes in the way services are delivered throughout the province. Indeed, the pressure for these changes is growing and will continue to do so until important steps are taken to restructure the service delivery system.

The Pressures for Change

Pressures for change

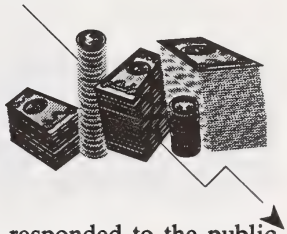
The pressures for change in the way services are delivered reflect both the challenges and changes that Albertans and the province itself have faced over the last decade, as well as the frustrations perceived by families in accessing and using services. Currently, five major pressures for change stand out:

- Changing economic conditions
- The realization that more is not necessarily better
- A reaffirmation of the importance of families and communities
- The demand for local community involvement in service planning and delivery
- The calls for proof that services are working

Individually, each of these pressures for change is a product of the changing social and economic climate within Alberta. Collectively, they all point to the need for new and better ways to deliver services for families.

Changing Economic Conditions

The recession of the 1980s and uncertainty of the 90s have led to concerns about government deficits and economic stability



The prolonged recession of the 1980s, and the subsequent restructuring of the economy, have led to growing concerns among Albertans about government deficits and general economic stability. For its part, the provincial government has responded to the public calls for increased efficiencies and a reduction in the growing provincial debt and deficit. Implementing changes is a complex task, however, one that requires careful analysis and consideration of all factors.

Albertans want a balanced provincial budget. This will mean changes in the way services are delivered.

As part of its commitment to a balanced budget, the provincial government has initiated public roundtable discussions to look at how reductions can be made across all government departments and services. The cap on federal cost sharing programs and the reduction in transfer payments, have left the provincial government with little room to manoeuvre in its commitment to deal with the provincial deficit and growing debt. Reductions in government spending must be made if the province is to rid itself of the increasing burden of a growing public debt. These reductions must include some fundamental reforms in the way services are delivered since it is services such as health, education and social programs which consume a growing portion of provincial revenue.

The government is currently defining the basic services that Alberta families need. This focus on basic service areas will subsequently be supported by a similar review of delivery options.

The Realization that More is not Necessarily Better

Although the number of services available continues to increase, the needs of many Alberta families are still not met. Families who receive services are not always happy with the outcomes that result.

Families are often uncertain as to who to contact for help

The growing array of specialized services and programs makes it difficult for many families to know who to contact when they need help. Increasingly, service providers are finding it difficult to refer families to the right agency. Indeed, there are now service agencies which specialize in helping families identify and apply for the specific services and programs to which they are entitled or need.

Families must often seek help from several different agencies at the same time

Even after families have successfully found a service to help them they often find that the needs of individual family members cannot be met by one program or service alone. They may therefore need to contact and work with several different agencies at the same time. This involves making numerous applications for services and meeting different eligibility guidelines.

The current fragmented service model is not well suited to meeting family needs

This fragmented model of service delivery is one which researchers increasingly recognize as being inconsistent with family needs. Family problems frequently fall across the boundaries of individual programs and require flexible, comprehensive approaches which transcend the restricted mandates of specific departments or agencies[3]. A consequence of a number of different agencies providing services to the family, is that family needs or problems are often addressed in a fragmented way without the benefit of a comprehensive or holistic response to needs. Solutions are, therefore, at best only partial ones - while in some cases the real problems are overlooked.

More services sometimes means more families 'in need'

Some researchers even argue that as the number of different services increases so does the number of families who are considered to need help. Indeed, some families may even be placed in programs which do not really meet their needs but rather support their dependence on such programs[4]. In such situations, agencies or the staff of individual programs might have the best intentions, but the services they provide may serve to increase a family's dependency and reliance on external supports and services and in so doing diminish their own abilities to support themselves. In these cases, services not only fail to help families meet their real needs, but may even contribute to the challenges they face.

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[3] Building Bridges for Families. S. Robinson and H. Binder. Public Welfare, p. 15-20, 1993.

[4] A Nation of Clients: Social Policy and the Poor. J.L. McKnight, *Public Welfare*, Fall, 1980, p. 15 - 19.

A Reaffirmation of the Importance of Families and Communities

Families and communities are important sources of support for people in need

There is a growing awareness of the importance of families and communities in helping people in times of need[5].

Most individuals who access services are members of families. As family members they may have additional resources to draw upon to support the professional help they receive. They may include spouses, siblings or parents. Also their commitments, and responsibilities to these same family members will be affected by their own challenges or hardships.

Most services do not have a family focus

Despite this, most services and programs still focus solely on problems faced by individual family members. They do not look at the broader experiences or needs of families. Indeed, most services and programs either overlook the needs of families, or are based on assumptions about families and family life that are outdated.[6]

The emphasis of the rights of the individual has overshadowed family values and commitments

An explicit focus on family needs is a key element of any service delivery model. Indeed, the focus on individuals as the basis for service delivery may serve to undermine the strengths of families and, on a broader scale, that of communities as well[7]. The championing of individual rights has, in some ways, led to a move away from collective responsibilities, the lessening of attachments to others, and a reduction in help and assistance provided by family and community members to each other.

Service agencies now fill many of the social gaps previously covered by family and friends

As a result, service agencies are themselves often called upon to fill many of the gaps previously filled by families, friends or even neighbours. Schools, for example, are now commonly asked to provide after hours care, teach life skills, and feed children. While they may have some success in doing this, the long term effects of professional staff filling these roles may in fact be to further weaken families and reduce local community supports. With decreased reliance on families for support, traditional social structures are further eroded and replaced by institutional substitutes.

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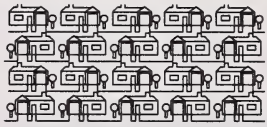
[5] Beyond Community Services. J.L. McKnight. Centre for Urban Affairs and Policy Research. Northwestern University. 1989

[6] "Families and Government: Implementing a Family Perspective in Public Policy." Theodora Ooms, *Social Thought*, Vol. 16, No. 2, 1990.

[7] A New Community of Thinkers, Both Liberal and Conservative. A. Hoziani. The Wall Street Journal, October 8, 1991.

The Demand for Local Community Involvement in Service Planning and Delivery



Families and local communities want more say in how services are planned and delivered

The reaffirmation of the importance of families and communities has, in turn, led to increased calls for families and communities themselves to play a much greater role in determining the services they need. With increasing special interest groups, and more planning at the local level, families and communities have a much greater voice, and more opportunity to express their own concerns and needs[8].

While some groups continue to rely on the government to play the major role in service delivery, more and more communities are calling for greater local control of services and programs. Some see the role of government diminished in delivery of services, with the government focusing instead more on planning and coordinating initiatives, policy and standard setting and monitoring outcomes.

Local groups know and understand local needs

Communities and local groups argue that it is only at the local level that the needs of families and individuals can be effectively met[9]. Local groups view themselves as better able to respond to the needs of their own communities since they both know and understand them.

The Calls for Proof that Services are Working

Albertans want services that work

In addition to these four pressures for change, there is a further growing public demand for services that are effective, and for service providers who are accountable to the people they serve[10].

Special interest groups have helped to raise Albertans' awareness of their own rights and responsibilities as service users. Indeed, many Albertans, unwilling to support tax increases, are increasingly concerned about the way in which their tax dollars are spent, and the value they receive for these expenditures in terms of positive outcomes for families.

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8 Changing Directions in Public Policy: Debates and Choices, Carts and Horses. S. Peters, R. Grasham and C. Laurin. The Policy Research Centre on Children, Youth and Families, May 1993.

9 Community Engagement, Collaboration in Integration of Services, and Client Empowerment: Solving the Puzzle. G. Snider. Community Visions for Canada. April 1993.

10 Toward 2000 Together: An Economic Strategy by Albertans for Albertans. Advisory Committee on Alberta's Economic Future. September 1993.

Service providers recognize the importance of improved outcomes

Public groups, service agencies and the government are all concerned that services are delivered in an effective and responsive way. As part of this, many service providers have started to look at outcome based results as one important measure of the impact of the initiatives or interventions they deliver. Albertans want this. They want proof that services and programs are working for them.

Part of the government's response to this focus on outcomes and accountability is its recently introduced competitive, department by department, budgeting process. As part of this process, each government department is preparing a detailed budget for the next three years which will reduce the provincial deficit to zero. The government has announced an intent to achieve a balanced budget by the 1996/97 financial year. The emphasis will be on ensuring that all Alberta families receive quality services, delivered at an affordable price.

*T*he *C*hanges *R*equired

The pressures on the service system point to the need for change

Together, these pressures on the current service system all point to the need for major revisions in the way services are planned and delivered.

To date, a number of different service models have been presented as possible alternatives to the current system. Some of these are outlined in Section IV of this report. For the most part, however, these models address specific program areas or elements of the service system rather than the whole system itself. By examining the results of these initiatives, as well as reviewing the growing literature on service delivery, some consensus is possible.

There is little doubt that the opportunity for change has come. The pressures for change are building and converging. The provincial government has set important precedents through its review of the role of government and its commitment to balance the budget and end the accumulation of a provincial debt. These initiatives provide the foundation for further action, and a framework is needed for more effective service delivery for the future.

The provincial government is committed to change - and wants Albertans to be involved in the process

For its part, the government is committed to public participation as part of this process. To this end, it will continue to encourage and support roundtable discussion groups throughout the province which will give Alberta families the opportunity to have their say in the way services are planned and delivered. The process of change is beginning, and the benefits of this change will have a major impact on Alberta families.

Looking for Help

Not sure who to turn to for help, Paula first called the physician who had initially seen John and then Kevin's school.

The physician told Paula that Alberta Family and Social Services might be able to help with some counselling or referral to an appropriate agency.

The principal, who was new at the school herself, was quite helpful. She advised Paula that a new program was currently available at the school which offered extra activities and support to students with learning disabilities. She advised that Kevin be enrolled right away.

Although Paula was pleased that Kevin would receive the help he needed with his studies, during her discussions with the principal, it became clear that the principal believed that Kevin's running away was really brought on by some of the family's other problems, specifically the uncertainty and stress brought on by John having to leave his job, and Kevin's involvement with peers who were experimenting with alcohol and drugs.

The principal, although she sympathized with Paula, apologized for not knowing anyone else who could help, and explained that she was new in town herself. She did suggest Paula try the local college and maybe even the health unit office in the next town. Paula telephoned the health unit. After talking to two different staff members, she was advised some community agency programs might be able to provide counselling, or that Paula could contact Child Welfare for help in parent-teen relations. Paula was concerned about contacting Child Welfare and therefore tried to find a counselling program in her community. Paula asked around among her friends, but no one knew of a suitable counselling program.

Looking for Help

(continued)

Paula noticed a "Social Services Guide" in the Edmonton phone book. As she continued her search she found that one agency would assess whether she qualified for financial assistance. Another would assess her husband's career needs, or her own potential, and possibly pay for upgrading, but the fact that they were not on Welfare or Unemployment Insurance might be a problem. There were a few possibilities for family counselling, and she could probably get an assessment and help for her feelings of depression through Mental Health Services, but there would be a wait for her first appointment for any of them. Most would involve a trip to Edmonton.

Paula was overwhelmed. With all her current crises, trying to follow up on all these leads, and to explain her situation over and over was discouraging and took more energy than she could find. Paula thought that it was up to her and John to sort it out.

III. Alberta Families and the Current Service System

Families are an important part of Albertans' lives

Albertans are strongly committed to their families. Despite many changes over the last two or three decades, families are an important part of Albertans daily lives and key sources of security, support, socialization and stimulation.

Like the Andersons, many families find the current service system both difficult to use and often unresponsive to their real needs. Despite the large number of services currently available, the needs of many families go unmet, while those who do use the service system are often left disappointed by the results.

Families who receive help and support remain healthy and functional

In every community there are families with needs. Families who receive help when they need it are often able to continue to function and support one another. Those who do not may face further problems, while those who have negative experiences in using services are often reluctant to seek help again when they do need it.

Alberta Families

84 percent of Albertans live in families

There are currently some 674,300 families in Alberta. Across the province, 84 percent of Albertans live in families and share in the many benefits and rewards that family life brings.

Today's families are smaller, more numerous and less stable

Alberta families today are different from those of two or three decades ago. As recently as the 1960s, most Alberta families were made up of married couples with two or more children. The husband was frequently the only partner who worked outside of the home and divorce was rare. Today, families are smaller in size, larger in number and more unstable in their formation and dissolution. Although husband and wife families are still the most common family unit, the number of lone-parent families continues to increase, as does the number of couples living common-law, and the number of Albertans who live alone.

Alberta Families today face many pressures

Despite these changes, the core focus of family life remains the same reflected in the caring, sharing and support which characterize the positive elements of family relationships. However, there are increased pressures on families today which have led more and more of them to seek support or assistance from government programs and service agencies.

More families and children now live on a low income than a decade ago, more lone-parents are raising children and more and more Albertans face the challenges of unemployment and underemployment. Albertans who are working must now work longer hours than in the past to maintain the same standard of living. For many families this means two or more wage earners working at the same time, and in many cases a reduction in family activities and involvements.

The current service system is not always able to respond effectively to meet these changing needs. This in turn places additional pressures on the families themselves, and in some cases may limit their own ability to continue to function adequately.

*T*he *S*ervices *A*vailable to *F*amilies

Families who need help are currently able to turn to a large array of services which cover almost all aspects of family life, and offer families a wealth of potential resources to draw upon. The challenge, however, is in first identifying who is out there to help and second in establishing an effective relationship with the service provider.

Who Delivers Services to Families?

A growing number of services are available to help families

A growing number of service agencies provide support for Alberta families across almost all dimensions of their daily lives. These services range from educating their children, to helping them plan for their retirement.

Almost all provincial government programs, for example, have some impact on Alberta families. There are also federal government programs and initiatives, joint provincial-municipal initiatives, as well as a growing number of non-governmental service agencies which also provide a wide range of services.

There are five major service providers

Currently, five major service providers offer help and support for Alberta families:

- The Provincial Government
- The Federal Government
- Municipal Governments
- Non-Profit Community Groups
- Private Sector Agencies

Not surprisingly, the number and range of services varies in different parts of the province. The largest number of service providers are concentrated in the two major cities of Edmonton and Calgary, with an estimated 1,000 human services agencies serving Edmonton and its surrounding area alone[11].

What types of Services are Available?

Services focus either on specific types of problems or on specific populations

These service providers offer a large number of different services and programs for Alberta families. In most cases, services are organized along the lines of a specific service area such as housing, health, income support and transportation. Other programs are designed for specific groups, such as seniors, children, or persons with disabilities.

The Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families, in its *Baseline Data Report on Government Programs Affecting Alberta Families*, divides the government programs which affect the lives of Alberta families into nine broad categories[12].

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[11] 1993 Directory of Community Services. The Support Network, Edmonton, Alberta.

[12] Baseline Data Report on Government Programs Affecting Alberta Families. The Premier's Council in Support of Alberta Families, 1993.

Advisory and Advocacy Services
These services help Albertans express their views and concerns and make changes in areas of government policy and private sector practice.

Community Security
These services protect Albertans by providing and maintaining law enforcement, and through ensuring fair business practices.

Family Economic Security
These programs and activities protect and support the economic needs of Alberta families through job and wage protection, income replacement and negotiation of federal benefits, tax credits and deductions.

Health, Mental Health and Well-being
These programs enhance and support health.

Housing
These programs support and assist Albertans in finding and maintaining their housing.

Internal Government Services
These services are dedicated to ensuring that the employees providing services to clients are appropriately trained.

Lifelong Learning
These services help individuals and family members develop academic, occupational, and social skills at all stages of their life.

Recreation and Culture
These programs and facilities encourage access, awareness and participation in recreational, cultural and multicultural opportunities.

Social Support Services
These programs and services support the development, security and functioning of individuals and families.

Each of these nine service areas cover a series of programs which address one or more specific elements of the major service area. Thus, when this information was compiled (1993) there were 29 different government programs related to family economic security, 17 involved with family health and well-being, and 16 covering the area of social support services.

In addition to these provincial government programs and services, there are also a large number of services and programs either funded federally, or at the municipal level. Many of these organizations and agencies rely on a combination of provincial and municipal government funding. Others are either non-profit organizations or private businesses.

In Edmonton alone, there are currently 14 family support programs offered by the City of Edmonton as well as a further 11 programs aimed at youth. Overall, there are some 500 different programs available to support families in Edmonton and Northern Alberta, including 225 counselling programs, 120 of which focus on children, and 72 programs which concentrate on family services[13].

How do Families get help when they need it?

Families must apply to individual agencies for help

Families who need help must first identify what type of help they need and second apply to the appropriate agency or government department which offers this type of service. This can be a very bewildering experience for families experiencing difficulties.

Each program or service generally has its own eligibility criteria. These eligibility criteria vary from program to program and from service provider to service provider.

To find the service or support they need, family members must often contact a number of different service agencies to determine which of the individual programs or services they require. In many cases, family members use more than one service or program at the same time. This means that they must contact a number of different agencies and often visit several service centres.

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[13] Community Connections Directory: A Directory of Community Services for the Edmonton Region, 1992: Published by Community Connections.

The Strengths of the Current Service System

Alberta families now receive more services than ever before

The growing number of service agencies throughout the province means that Alberta families currently receive more services than at any time in the past. These services are delivered by a growing number of agencies and organizations who offer programs and services that cover almost all aspects of family life ranging from prenatal care for mothers and infants to long term care and support for the frail elderly.

The current service system has four major strengths

Four major strengths of the current service system stand out:

- There are more services and programs available to Alberta families than ever before.
- There is a large body of skilled professionals, from many different backgrounds, available to help families.
- There is a large allocation of resources to support programs and services for all Albertans. In 1992/93 the provincial government alone budgeted 8.5 billion dollars for programs and services.
- There is a greater emphasis on coordinating services between different agencies, and on meeting the needs of individuals and families.

The Challenges Families Face in Accessing and Using Services

The strengths of the current service system are also linked, in part, to the challenges families face in applying for and receiving help and support. The large number of agencies available, and the many different programs they offer, make it difficult for some families to access and use the services that they need. Service providers themselves find it a challenge both to identify the services people need and to coordinate their own services with those of other agencies or organizations.

Alberta families face four main challenges in getting help

The challenges families face in accessing and receiving help fall into four main areas.

Knowing who to Call or Contact

Families are often unaware of the different services available

Families in need of help are often unaware of the many different services available to support them. They are uncertain as to who to turn to for assistance when they need it. As a result, they may either receive no help or apply for services that are unsuitable for their needs.

Low income families, and those with special needs have the most difficulty in getting information on the services they need. These families often lack the resources and skills available to other families, and may even be discouraged from seeking help because of the way services are organized and delivered.

The challenge some service providers face in remaining up to date on changes in services other than their own also makes it difficult for them to appropriately refer families who need support to other programs or services. The large number of agencies providing services, as well the many different programs available, make it hard for professionals working in the area to keep up with all the possible service options available to families. Families must, therefore, rely primarily on their own efforts or contact an agency in the business of making referrals.

Receiving Help that Meets their Needs

The services families need are not always readily available

Families who have successfully identified a particular service agency or program, as a possible source of support, often face two further frustrations: first, the realization that the specific program they require is not available locally, and second, the discovery that the services offered through this one program or agency are not able to meet their needs, and that they must apply to other agencies or programs at the same time.

With the exception of the larger cities in Alberta, many local communities often have only limited access to specialized services or programs. Families who require these specialized services must, therefore, travel to larger centres. This journey itself may form a significant barrier to many families seeking help, because of the travel costs and time involved, as well as the lack of familiarity with a different community.

Some families in Edmonton and Calgary face similar challenges in travelling to unfamiliar sections of the city to receive services. Unless services are available in their own local community, some families may be reluctant to get the help or support they need.

Family needs often extend beyond the mandates of single programs

In addition, the needs of most families extend beyond the scope or mandate of individual programs. Many families who request help must, therefore, make separate applications to a number of different agencies at the same time, and meet the eligibility criteria of each. Families who receive support from one program alone, often find that their needs extend beyond the boundaries of individual programs, and as a result they receive only part of the help they need.

The inability of individual programs to respond flexibly to families' needs ultimately limits their effectiveness. This in turn makes the whole experience of finding and receiving help a time-consuming and demanding one for many families.

Maintaining Self Esteem and Independence

Families often find the whole experience of asking for and receiving help a negative one

Service providers, by their very nature, are in a position of authority, which places the family or individual requesting help in a position of dependency. There is often a focus on the problem, rather than the strengths of the family. This may lead to feelings of alienation and even despair on the part of the individual requesting help.

Such a relationship makes it difficult for family members to take an active role in making the changes needed to improve their own lives. It may even contribute to the loss of self esteem among family members and ultimately a state of dependency. Families literally give in, and become increasingly reliant upon the service system itself, rather than using it as a support to complement the resources already available to them. The professional's focus on the family member or family's weaknesses or needs alone, rather than their strengths, may add to feelings of helplessness and low self esteem. This may ultimately make the whole experience of requesting and receiving help a negative one.

The benefits many families gain from the help they receive are either limited or short-lived

Deriving Real or Lasting Benefits from Service Interventions

By the time families receive help they may already be in a crisis situation. The crisis management focus of many services means that many of those families who do receive help have already experienced a significant amount of trauma and the road to recovery is often a long and challenging one.

The specific problem focus of many service agencies means that while family members or families often receive help with their immediate needs, the longer term or broader challenges they face often go unaddressed. This specific problem focus provides families with only temporary relief and often leads to them returning for additional help at periodic intervals. While the crisis may be alleviated, the underlying problems remain.

This situation is frustrating both for the family members or families involved, who may feel more helpless as a result, and for the service professionals who may become discouraged with their role in the service delivery process.

IV. Some New Service Initiatives

A number of different service initiatives are either planned or underway

The Alberta government, in consultation with other service providers, as well as with Albertans, has begun to address some of the challenges presented by current service delivery models. A number of different initiatives are currently either proposed or underway within Alberta, all of which offer creative solutions to the challenges that families face in accessing services and in receiving the support they need.

These initiatives are examples of alternate service models. Considered together, however, they provide examples of how changes may be made in the way services are delivered throughout the province.

New Initiatives

Among the many different initiatives either proposed or underway, several specific initiatives stand out:

New initiatives underway

- Coordination of Services for Children
- The Community Supports Project
- Brighter Futures - Community Action Program for Children
- Regulatory Initiative "Alberta Consumer Assistance and Registry Services"
- Health System Restructuring
- Children's Advocate's Review of Alberta's Child Welfare System
- Redesign of Services for Children and Families

The strengths of each initiative and the contribution of each to developing more integrated and effecting services for children and families are highlighted here.

Coordination of Services for Children

Children and families get the services they need with the minimum of intrusion

The Coordination of Services for Children initiative is designed to ensure that children and families get the services they need with the minimum intrusion into their lives. Five communities and four provincial government departments are involved in the initiative, which is guided by seven objectives:

- family-focused service delivery
- better services for children and their families
- stream-lined processes that minimize intrusion into children's lives
- increased and easier access to services
- better use of existing resources
- increased local decision-making
- services structured to make sense for each community

The initiative was a direct response to some existing service issues affecting children and families in need:

- fragmentation
- duplication
- service gaps
- turf protection

The five communities involved in the program are Calgary, Edmonton, Lethbridge, Wabasca-Desmarais and Wetaskiwin. Since May 1993, each community has set about developing its own community-based service system, and each has reported some successes.

As part of the general program, individual coordination initiatives are considered successful if they promote and support seven major outcomes:

- families feel they are well served
- there is clarity of purpose, roles and responsibilities
- there is commitment of member agencies/service providers to address service delivery problems
- services are flexible, innovative and accessible

- community is supportive of initiative and willing to participate to improve services
- there is interagency cooperation to provide coordinated services
- results are achieved within existing resources

Although the initiative is still in its early stages, the response from communities has been positive and creative plans are emerging to integrate service delivery at the local level.

The Community Supports Project

The Premier's Council on the Status of Persons with Disabilities, in conjunction with the Alberta Coalition for Community Supports, continues to pursue the establishment of a single consolidated Community Supports Program. The following key principles would guide the proposed program and its intended operation:

- The consolidation of the existing 20-25 support programs that provide personal and technical supports into a single program administered by one existing government department
- Local access to this program for disabled Albertans within their own communities
- A single set of eligibility criteria which is based on the legitimate needs of consumers, and
- The involvement of disabled consumers in both the discussion and development of a Community Supports Program model

The new single program would not involve the expenditure of additional funds, but rather the more efficient use of the existing resources allocated to current disability support programs.

The model enables people with disabilities to get all the services they need in one place

The proposed service model is actually one of integrated service delivery. This model is supported by large elements of the disabled community who would gain easier access to the personal and technical supports they currently need. In essence, the model would allow persons with disabilities to access the services they require in one place rather than facing a series of visits to a number of different offices and departments.

The move toward a Community Supports Program model is consistent with the current provincial government philosophy of creating an open, efficient and streamlined government model. At present, representatives from individual government departments are working together to develop options for implementation of the proposed model.

Brighter Futures - Community Action Program for Children

The Brighter Futures program helps local communities promote the health and social development of at risk children

The Community Action Program for Children is an ongoing federal initiative designed as a federal/provincial partnership process. The program helps local communities develop a continuum of integrated programs to promote the optimal health and social development of at-risk children and their families through the preconception, prenatal, postpartum, infant and early childhood periods.

Currently, it is estimated that one out of every five children is likely to experience a higher-than-normal incidence of poor health and social development. These in turn translate into a complex and multi-faceted range of problems which may impact greatly on a child's ability to lead a healthy and productive life.

The Brighter Futures program draws on research which indicates that the life chances of children at risk can be significantly improved through prevention, intervention and health promotion efforts in the early stages of development. For this reason the funding program targets children and their families from before birth to age six.

While initial steps have been taken in many regions and communities across Alberta to provide support to families in the early stages of development, a stronger commitment is needed to expand programs for disadvantaged infants, young children and their families.

Through the Community Action Program for Children, funding is provided to incorporated, non-profit community or voluntary organizations for projects that meet the needs of high-risk children aged 0 to 6 and their families. The program promotes an inter-disciplinary approach to child development that includes a strong emphasis on the dissemination of information on successful programs and on outcome evaluation.

To be eligible for funding, projects must be long-term, community-managed projects that meet provincial priorities in child development and prevention. In addition, they are required to complement existing services in place, and demonstrate alliances among several service providers. Programs that already exist under the legislated mandates of government departments are not usually eligible for funding.

Regulatory Initiative "Alberta Consumer Assistance and Registry Services"

Albertans are able to access a number of different services more easily and readily

In February 1993, a new government agency was formed to provide a "one window" approach for Alberta consumers. As part of this initiative, Albertans in rural areas are now able to receive services they have not previously been able to access locally, while urban Albertans experience more convenient enhanced services.

Prior to this new service, several government departments provided consumer assistance and a variety of registry services to Albertans, everything from vehicle registration to vital statistics. In the major urban centres, these services were all available, but not at a single location. In many rural areas, these services were simply not available and people had to drive considerable distances to access the services they needed.

The emphases of the initiative are threefold: one-stop shopping, customer-focused service delivery, and improved service accessibility in communities across the province.

Through this initiative, current service delivery systems are restructured according to the following guidelines:

- similar services are provided through a one-window approach
- government services are available on a truly local basis, and
- the private sector provides local service delivery, wherever possible.

To date, the services combined under a single agency cover the following areas:

- motor vehicles registration
- land titles registry
- personal property registry
- vital statistics registry
- corporate registry
- land-related information
- consumer assistance

Health System Restructuring

Alberta's health system is undergoing fundamental restructuring in full collaboration with health providers and the public. The process of health reform began with the release of the *Rainbow Report* and the Government response called *Partners in Health*. The more recent public roundtables on health and related written submissions have led to the recommendations put forward in *Starting Points: Recommendations for Creating a More Affordable and Accountable Health System.* These recommendations provide direction for the long term restructuring of Alberta's health system. The Minister has established the Health Plan Coordination Project Steering Committee, that has prepared an Action Plan outlining the initial steps and timelines for restructuring the health system.

The goal of restructuring is to define "an Alberta Health Plan that establishes expected health outcomes and a basic standard of service for all Albertans, with a multiple focus on the responsibility of the individual, the community and the health care system."

The Health Plan has two fundamental objectives:

1. To maintain or improve health through personal and community commitment to healthy living.

2. To provide a health care system to prevent, diagnose or treat illness; support the disabled and relieve suffering, through high quality, integrated, effective services placing the needs of the consumer as the highest priority.

The following guidelines will be used as criteria against which all restructuring initiatives will be evaluated and prioritized:

- Distribution of Responsibility, with particular regard to:

  - the ability of individual Albertans to maintain and improve their own health through a personal and community commitment to healthy living.
  - the ability of individual Albertans to understand and access health care services, with due regard to the effectiveness and costs of these services.

- Accountability for Effectiveness, with particular regard to:

  - the ability to measure and communicate costs to both users and deliverers of health services.
  - the ability to define and measure outcomes.

- Affordability, with particular regard to:

  - the long term Provincial funding plan for health services.
  - the role of sustained, alternate funding sources.

- Responsiveness of the system to the current and emerging health care needs of Albertans, with particular regard to:

  - integration and coordination of all aspects of health care delivery.
  - sensitivity to community-based identification of health care needs.
  - the ability to meet basic standards for services as defined within the Alberta Health Plan.
  - the incorporation of participative decision-making on the part of consumers, health care providers and funding authorities, as appropriate.

Children's Advocate's Review of Alberta's Child Welfare System

An integrated and coordinated child welfare system is proposed

The Children's Advocate's review of the Child Welfare System in Alberta includes the outline of a new service model for the delivery of child, youth and family services in Alberta. Two concepts are central to the model: integration and coordination. These two concepts are supported by three "fundamental change strategies" designed to achieve change in the current systems:

- The *decentralization* of Child Welfare, Children's Mental Health, and Young Offender Services by delegating the authorities and providing the resources to operate and deliver services at the local or community level.
- The development by local communities, of appropriate *integrating and coordinating mechanisms* in order to achieve an effective and efficient continuum of "locally owned" programs and services with the flexibility to adapt to local needs.
- The *integration* of central legislative, policy, funding, standards development, program monitoring and evaluation functions at the provincial department level.

These change strategies promote a service model which centers upon integration and coordination and represents a significant departure from the existing models in place. A plan to reshape Child Welfare was announced by the Honorable Mike Cardinal in November 1993. A specific aspect of this plan was the appointment of the Commissioner of Services for Children. The role of the Commissioner is described in more detail in the next section.

Redesign of Services for Children and Families

Of the initiatives, described previously, the most comprehensive was initiated in November 1993 by the Government of Alberta. At that time, a commitment was made to redesign the services provided to children and families by the Departments of Health, Justice, Education and Family and Social Services. The government created the position of the Commissioner of Services for Children to carry out this initiative within an eighteen month time frame.

The objectives of the redesign are to develop a new system which will be more:

- efficient and effective
- affordable
- based on an integrated service delivery network
- accessible and responsive
- based on community priorities and needs
- managed by and delivered within communities

The Commissioner's report acknowledges that:

- Although many agencies and individuals work hard to assist children and families, there are problems with the current approach.

- Over the past decade, the four departments that share responsibility for services for children and families have found that gaps in services and the fragmented approach to providing services have undermined their effectiveness.

- The departments have indicated that coordination and integration are necessary.

- In addition, there is growing recognition that effective services must build on the strengths of families and communities.

The work that will be initiated through the Commissioner's office will address questions of vision, goals, service philosophy, results, provincial structure, regional authorities, local service delivery and funding of services for children and families. This will be done in consultation with communities and stakeholders.

The Common Elements of New Initiatives

Each of these new initiatives impacts or has the potential to have an impact on the way services are designed and delivered for Alberta families. Although each initiative has its own individual focus, together they all address many of the key challenges which confront service systems throughout the province:

These initiatives address many of the service delivery challenges which confront families

- A redefinition of the role of government and non-government agencies in delivering services.
- The importance of delivering services that meet service user needs in a flexible and responsive manner.
- The recognition of individuals requesting help as members of families and other larger social networks or groups.
- The need for collaboration among service providers and the integration of service programs.
- The focus on local needs expressed at the local level.
- The increased emphasis on outcomes and accountability in service delivery.
- An increased emphasis on prevention and on maintaining and improving well-being through personal and community responsibility.

Together, these initiatives, as well as other innovative programs and services throughout the province, are all part of the government's ongoing commitment to serve families and Albertans better. In this sense, they reflect the growing recognition that the way services are delivered must change so that they become both more effective and responsive.

Drawing on the key features of each of these initiatives, as well as the other initiatives either planned or underway, some important new directions for service delivery to Alberta families are proposed here as a basis for further public discussion. The directions proposed in Section V of this report provide a framework for services which can more effectively meet family needs. Such services must be sensitive to changing family needs, while remaining mindful of the current challenges all Albertans face as the province addresses its fiscal challenges.

Making the Service System Work for the Andersons

The problems the Anderson's experienced in getting the help they needed, when they needed it, are similar to those many Alberta families face on a daily basis.

The Anderson's problem is in fact a series of problems that are linked together. In the first instance, John's inability to carry on working in construction was a serious financial blow to the family and a personally damaging one for John himself. This in turn placed additional pressures on the whole family, pressures which exceeded their abilities to cope, and led to a partial breakdown in the family.

Despite various appeals for help, the family received little assistance in addressing their real problems. The family had contact with a series of different services: the physician, the school, the college, and the health unit. And yet, they still felt deserted and alone.

What could the service system have done differently to help the Andersons? At least four things stand out:

- The family needed easier access to the system or at least more information on the variety of different services available to them. They did not know who to contact or just what services may have been available to help them. Despite contacting a number of different services no one agency was available to help them or advise them how to find information or an appropriate integrated or coordinated service to meet their needs.

- The individual service professionals the family contacted did not take the time to really understand the nature of the family's problems. The school principal was the only one to sit down with any member of the family and talk about the

Making the Service System Work for the Andersons

(continued)

challenges they were facing, but still did not provide any information or a referral on how to deal with Kevin's association with problem peers or to lessen the risk of him running away again.

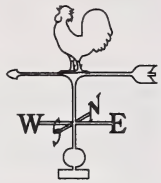
- The individual service professionals the family met with did not coordinate their own services with those of other service providers. The local physician, for example, did not refer John to either any medical specialists or explore with John the possibility of any alternative treatments. Neither did the college refer John to any other programs or schools who may have been able to help him with his upgrading, or to help him in his career planning.

- Despite their contacts with the service system, the family did not receive any real support or help until they reached a crisis situation. No information was given to John or Paula after John's injury on the possible outcomes of job loss such as depression, loss of self esteem and money problems. Thus, when the tensions at home increased the family was not prepared for them and lapsed into a crisis situation before they received help.

With one or more of these changes to the way services were delivered, the Andersons would have had a better chance of dealing with the challenges they faced. While no service system can ever prevent families from experiencing problems, they can be there to provide appropriate support when necessary. The goal of any service must be to meet the needs of the intended users first. With families the major users of services, it is critical that all agencies and service providers remain sensitive to the needs of families.

V. Making Services Work for Families: The Directions for Change

Eight directions for change are proposed



This final section of the report outlines a series of important directions for change in the way services are planned throughout Alberta. It is proposed that these directions for change be further reviewed and discussed as part of the work to be undertaken by the Commissioner of Services for Children and Families. These directions are unique starting points for the move toward more effective, responsive services which meet the needs of all Alberta families and Albertans.

The changes proposed reflect the changing service needs of Alberta families, the findings of research on successful service initiatives, as well as the current fiscal realities that face the government and all Albertans. Improvements in the way services are delivered and planned will benefit all Albertans and are an important part of the commitment to a prosperous province.

1 DIRECTION FOR CHANGE

A Redefinition of the Government's Role in Service Delivery

The role of the provincial government in service delivery must be redefined

To provide a framework for the fundamental review of service delivery to families, the role of the provincial government in service delivery must be redefined, and its relationships with local communities and families rationalized.

One possible model for this redefinition of the government's role in service delivery draws on the principle of subsidiarity, as defined within the European Community Maastricht Agreement.

Based on this principle, programs and services are delivered at the lowest level compatible with their effective administration and operational efficiency. By contrast, broad policy direction is retained more centrally providing the basis for a wide ranging directional and planning framework.

The government would focus on policy, planning, standards, monitoring and evaluation

Within this model, the role of the provincial government in service delivery would be consolidated. The government would focus on the development and maintenance of policy and planning roles for service delivery, the definition of service delivery standards, the overview of funding guidelines, and program monitoring and evaluation functions.

Service delivery itself would take place at the local community level, with local groups, agencies and non-governmental organizations having the delegated authority and resources necessary to deliver services that meet local needs.

As part of its planning role, the government would ensure that a publicly agreed menu of basic services are available to all Albertans, with local communities and agencies given the freedom to supplement these as local needs dictate. The provincial government would also ensure the overall maintenance of service standards while supporting the effective and efficient delivery of services at the local level.

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

1.1 Develop a clear statement of the roles and responsibilities of families, communities and governments.

1.2 Following role rationalization, develop and implement a strategy that clearly explains the government role, the rationale for this role, and the benefits that flow from it.

1.3 Undertake a systematic review of all services and programs to determine how they should be more appropriately delivered based on revised government roles and responsibilities.

1.4 Ongoing discussions are required with individual communities to examine the most effective ways of delivering services. Discussions would be consistent with the defined government roles and responsibilities agreed to as the starting point for system rationalization.

1.5 Provide government support to local communities to assist them in identifying their own strengths and reviewing the appropriate mechanisms and structures for service delivery.

2 DIRECTION FOR CHANGE

The Introduction of Community-Based Service Regions

A series of service regions would be introduced

As a second component of the rationalization of service delivery, a series of service regions should be created throughout the province. These regions, managed by regional planning committees, would provide the framework for the planning and development of integrated and coordinated service systems at regional and community levels. Resources would be allocated to individual regions by the provincial government based on regional population needs.

The service regions would define the geographical boundaries for the delivery of all human services funded by the provincial government. Health services, educational services and social services would all be managed and coordinated at a regional level, with the boundaries of each sector matching those of the region.

Regional planning committees would work with local agencies to meet local needs

The regional planning committee within each region would administer the service system with local regional centres or communities responsible for coordinating and delivering services at the local level. The responsibility for developing unique local programs or services would rest with local communities who would request help or support from the regional planning committee based on demonstrated local needs.

Families or individuals requesting service would first make contact with local service providers who would assume responsibility for referring them to other local agencies or services. Service needs not met at the local level would be directed to regional centres.

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

2.1 New service regions based on coterminous regional boundaries for Health, Education, Family and Social Services and Municipal Affairs should reflect established patterns of interaction and wherever possible build on current regional structures already in place.

2.2 In consultation with service professionals and interested publics, develop guidelines and protocols for the form and function of regional planning committees.

2.3 Establish mechanisms for the reallocation of dollars through regional funding of services by:

- assessing existing services and resources available to possible service regions;
- allocating service dollars to regions based on individual/family need and socio-demographic factors.

2.4 Promote and establish mechanisms for collaboration and information exchange among community programs and services. The focus should be on developing coordinated, integrated local service delivery.

3 DIRECTION FOR CHANGE

The Development of Programs that are Relevant, Flexible and Diverse

Services would be holistic and inclusive

To meet the often complex needs of families, services would remain relevant, assume a more holistic nature and be delivered in a manner that is inclusive rather than exclusive.

Services would be delivered on the basis of the real needs of individuals and families rather than as a result of narrowly defined program mandates. Services would be responsive to the needs of families.

To achieve this, program mandates would become broader rather than narrower. The ideal would be that of a 'seamless' service system in which families move readily from one service to another as needed.

Family members would be referred to other service agencies as their needs dictate

When referrals are required for other services, the referring agency would follow locally agreed guidelines and help the service user complete the referral. Relevant information should also be shared, wherever appropriate so as to avoid the need for multiple assessments or reviews. Within this framework, family records or assessments would be shared by service providers with confidentiality not used as a barrier to information sharing, but respected by all.

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

Relevant government departments should work to:

3.1 Explore opportunities for the use of broader service delivery mandates by service providers which enable them to deliver services in more flexible individualized ways.

3.2 Review the staff roles and position descriptions of frontline service deliverers to provide them with more flexibility and opportunities to work creatively with families.

3.3 Examine more flexible eligibility criteria for all human services which focus on people rather than problems.

3.4 Support local communities in the development of regional guidelines for referrals between agencies within local centres and where appropriate between regions.

3.5 Encourage the continued training and education of all service providers in the holistic nature of service delivery and the value of diversity and flexibility in service programming and delivery.

4 DIRECTION FOR CHANGE

A Greater Focus on Families

Services focus on families and family needs

Services and programs would become sensitive to the needs of families and recognize that most service users are members of families. A focus on families is vital in all phases of service delivery since it both acknowledges and affirms the social context of service users.

Through the delivery of services, service providers would support the family. Proposed interventions would be planned and implemented as an integral part of the family's daily life and provide the family with the maximum opportunity to include these interventions as part of their everyday routines.

Any interventions or supports would aim to build on the existing strengths of families and draw on available family resources as part of the service solution.

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

4.1 Ensure the ongoing use of the Family Policy Grid by all senior government staff in reviewing government policy. Make the Grid part of each department's culture through orientation/training at all organizational levels, and the introduction of policy monitoring systems.

4.2 Encourage all Ministers to continue as advocates for a family focus in government policies.

4.3 Work with local communities to establish mechanisms to enhance the family voice and parental perspectives.

4.4 Establish strategies to promote awareness among all service providers on the need to recognize the family context when involved in individual interventions. Focus specifically on the training of professionals to make them more aware of the needs and strengths of families as compared to individuals and to enable them to address the unique requirements of families.

5 DIRECTION FOR CHANGE

Promote the More Active Role of Services Users in Service Planning and Delivery

Families would become more actively involved in the service delivery process. Families receiving support would be encouraged to contribute information and strategies to address their own needs, as they see them, and would be supported in this role by service providers.

Families are actively involved in service planning and delivery

Solutions to family problems would be developed in conjunction with the families themselves, with all services delivered in a manner which helps families see their own options and the varied opportunities available to them.

All services would work toward creating a greater degree of independence on behalf of individual families thereby reducing their need for services.

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

5.1 Encourage local agencies to provide ongoing education for all service providers on the importance of recognizing the essential role of families in identifying the goals and outcomes for change.

5.2 Support continued empowerment of families through the provision of information on services and in the promotion of family centered practices.

5.3 Encourage the development of services that are sensitive to individual needs, family roles and cultural realities.

5.4 Work with local agencies and service providers to develop a shared, integrated philosophy for service delivery which focusses on working with families.

5.5 Redefine staff roles to enable them to work more interactively with families requesting help.

5.6 Promote the establishment of program delivery points in local community settings that are accessible to those who need them.

6 DIRECTION FOR CHANGE

A Greater Emphasis on Promotion and Prevention

Promotion and prevention components are emphasized

All service regions would include promotion and prevention components. These components should support families and provide them with strategies that enable them to take control of their own lives and situations, to maintain their own independence, and to function in a healthy, positive manner.

Promotion and prevention information should be readily available to all families but especially those considered in any way 'at risk.' Information would be available in a variety of different forms and contexts, with ongoing promotion and prevention materials and support given to families in their individual communities.

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

6.1 Emphasize and support ongoing public education on family well-being and healthy family relationships.

6.2 Encourage all service professionals to consider their roles in promoting healthy family relationships and preventing family dependence on service systems.

7 DIRECTION FOR CHANGE

An Increased Focus on Outcomes

Service outcomes are clearly stated and match individual family needs

Services and programs would be delivered with clearly defined outcomes. These outcomes would be closely related to a comprehensive, sensitive and culturally appropriate assessment of family needs and strengths.

To ensure family involvement in the service delivery process, all outcomes would be discussed with family members, and agreed outcomes consistent with family goals.

Progress toward outcomes would be carefully monitored by service providers and family members. Revisions of outcomes would be agreed by all parties, and any failures to achieve outcomes reviewed. In addition to individual programs establishing goals, province wide goals should be established as measures of quality of life, for example employment levels, income levels, literacy, school achievement, measures of health etc.

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

7.1 Government departments, service professionals, and communities, work together to establish outcome measures for services and programs for families and children. This would require establishing agreed upon measures of success in achieving a better quality of life for Albertans. Oregon has developed a model that can be used as a basis for such measurement.[14]

7.2 Develop and introduce monitoring strategies to review the outcomes achieved by individual programs and services. Encourage the development of monitoring strategies during the planning stage.

7.3 Structure funding mechanisms to ensure the periodic use of independent evaluators to examine the effectiveness of programs using both formative and summative evaluation designs.

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[14] *Oregon Benchmarks: Standards for Measuring Statewide Progress and Government Performance* - Report to the 1993 Legislature Oregon Progress Board, 1992.

8 DIRECTION FOR CHANGE

The Provision of Better Information on Services

Information about services is readily available to all families

Family access to information on services would be improved. Families would have ready access to comprehensive information on service availability, admission criteria, program focus and outcomes.

Information would be available in local, culturally sensitive terms and tailored to meet the needs of local population groups.

Improved information on services, and improved access to information on services, would also be available to local service providers. The formation of local interagency networks, as one step in this process, would be supported and encouraged.

STRATEGIES FOR CHANGE

8.1 Review strategies for providing all families with information on available services. Review the information content, form and method of distribution required for different groups of service users.

8.2 Develop a government wide interactive computerized data bank on government funded services.

8.3 Work with local communities to assess their individual information needs regarding services.

8.4 Review information sharing strategies with service professionals and interested publics in local community settings.

8.5 Develop working relationships with local and provincial businesses that are advancing technological solutions to streamline access to information.

VI. Implementing Changes

Many initiatives are currently underway with a goal to improve delivery of services to families. Some of these have been discussed in this report. Changes are currently being planned which will have significant impact on families. The strategies proposed in this report are in some cases being addressed as part of these initiatives.

The Council believes that fundamental transformation of the systems that serve and support families is essential. It is based on the view that a significant challenge in our society is to make better use of existing resources while improving the services and supports needed by families and their members. The many initiatives underway already, suggest that there is a readiness to move forward in developing and implementing better ways of serving and supporting families. The Premier's Council wants to engage in collaborative efforts towards this end and sees the proposals put forward in this paper as a starting point for such discussions. The public is a significant partner in these discussions. The Commissioner of Services for Children is the key facilitator of this significant change process. The Council will work with the Commissioner to support the redesign of services to support families in more effective ways.

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